

Exploring the Historical Transformations and Modern Inheritance of Tabu Culture in Lang County, Tibet

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Abstract

This article focuses on the current state of the transmission of Tabu culture in modern society. With the acceleration of modernization, Tabu culture faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities. On one hand, traditional lifestyles and values are gradually fading, and young people's awareness and acceptance of traditional culture are decreasing. On the other hand, the government and various sectors of society are increasingly emphasizing cultural heritage, implementing a series of measures to protect and transmit Tabu culture. Through field research and interviews, it provides a detailed description of the transmission of Tabu culture in modern society, including the inheritance and development of traditional arts, the maintenance and changes in religious rituals, and the role of cultural tourism in promoting Tabu culture. Finally, we propose development strategies for the modern transmission of Tabu culture. In response to existing issues and challenges, this article suggests focusing on several aspects: first, strengthening cultural education and publicity to enhance young people's understanding and acceptance of traditional culture; second, promoting innovation and development in traditional arts to better meet the needs of modern society; third, enhancing the protection and utilization of cultural heritage to achieve a win-win situation between cultural transmission and economic development; fourth, promoting cultural exchange and integration to increase the

influence and appeal of Tabu culture. These research findings are significant for promoting the inheritance and development of Tabu culture and advancing cultural prosperity in the Tibet region.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lunggar County, located on the southwestern frontier of China, is renowned for its 'Snowy Plateau' beauty. Its unique geographical position and natural environment have nurtured a rich cultural heritage. The area boasts high altitudes, continuous snow-capped mountains, and fresh air, resembling a pristine sanctuary. Tabu culture, an essential part of Lunggar's cultural tapestry, has deep historical roots and distinct cultural value. It encompasses abundant folk tales, ancient religious rituals, and exquisite handicrafts, all reflecting the local people's wisdom and aesthetic tastes. However, with the acceleration of modernization, the transmission and development of Tabu culture face numerous challenges. Modern influences are gradually eroding traditional lifestyles, and younger generations are losing interest in their cultural heritage, leading many precious traditions to the brink of extinction. Therefore, studying the historical evolution and modern transmission of Tabu culture is crucial for preserving and promoting this invaluable heritage. Here, through field research and interviews, we focus on understanding the transformation process of Tabu culture and exploring.

II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TABU CULTURE

2.1 Geography and History of Lang County

Lang County, traditionally known as Lower Tabu, borders Upper Gongbu (now Wolong Township in Milin County). This area is characterized by its mountainous terrain and winding rivers, with stunning natural scenery. Before the 7th century, before the establishment of the unified Tubo regime, the Lang County region was divided into various independent principalities, each with its unique culture and customs. In the first half of the 7th century, after Songtsen Gampo established the Tubo regime, Lang County became part of the 'Lower Yarlung' administration, integrating into the Tubo territory. Subsequently, Lang County experienced numerous changes in governance and periods of warfare, but its unique geographical location and abundant natural resources always made it strategically significant. Ultimately, during the Yuan Dynasty, Lang County came under the jurisdiction of the central government, ushering in a relatively stable period of development.

2.2 The Formation and Development of Tabu Culture

2.2.1 The Origin and Early History of Tabu Place Names

According to 'Historical Place Names in Tibetan Texts', Tabo (Tabu) Zhongda is situated between Upper Tabo and Lower Tabo. The 'Tabo Zhongda' ཐུགས་པོ་འབྲུག་མངའ་, mentioned multiple times in 'The Biography of Guo Xun Nubai' refers to the area known as ' ཐུགས་མངའ་ '. In current official

documents, the Tibetan term for Zhongda, written as 'ཟླ་མ་དཀར་' or 'ཟླ་མ་མདུན་', should accurately be 'ཟླ་མ་དཀར་'. During the later period of the Phamo Drupa regime and under the rule of the Desi Tsenpa, this region was governed by Dhiba Gureba Langjie. Under the Ganden Podrang regime, the entire Zhongda area fell under the jurisdiction of Gureba Langjie's Zongxi. Today, this area is known as Zhongda Town in Rong County, Linzhi City.

The origin of the name Tubu can be traced back to the time of Songtsen Gampo. According to research, during Songtsen Gampo's reign, the Tubu region was part of one of the five wings of the Upper and Lower Tibet areas. At that time, it was inhabited by tribes led by the Tuba clan, hence the name 'Tubo'. Songtsen Gampo was the founding emperor of the Tibetan Empire. During his rule (629-650 AD), he quelled internal turmoil within Tibet and greatly expanded the empire's territory, making Tibet a powerful state on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. As the Tibetan Empire rose and unified the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the Tubo region gradually became an important administrative area. In early history, the Tubo region, with its unique geographical location and abundant natural resources, made significant contributions to the development of the Tibetan Empire. Songtsen Gampo implemented several major measures to consolidate the newly established Tibetan Empire, including creating the Tibetan script still in use today and establishing laws, which had a profound impact on Tibetan history.

Traditionally, the Lang County area was part of the Lower Tsetang region, centered around today's Jindong Township. In 1960, Langdung,

Jurulangjie Creek (also known as 'Xike,' which means 'estate' in Tibetan and is administratively equivalent to a county), Jindong Creek, and the eastern part of Jagacha County were merged to form Lang County, under the administration of the Shannan Prefecture (in the 1980s, Lang County was reassigned to Nyingchi). In March 1959, following an order from the State Council, the feudal serfdom system combining politics and religion was abolished. In 1959, Lang County was divided into six districts and twenty-five townships: Jurulangjie District, North Bank District, Laduo District, Dongjia District, Jindong District, and Zhahe District. Jurulangjie District had six subordinate townships.

In 1987 and 1988, after the work of transforming districts into townships, the original five districts were divided into six townships: Dengmu Township, Zhongda Township, Zilong Township, Lado Township, Dongga Township, and Jindong Township. At that time, the villages of Lie Village and Xi Village, originally under Dongga District, were incorporated into Jindong Township. Additionally, Qujiang Township from the former Gurlu Langjie District, Dui Ba Township, and Langcun Township from the former Lado District were merged to form Zilong Township.

It is said that Rang County was once part of the descendants of the Qin family during the Tubo period. This area holds their roots and the sacred mountain they relied on. The word 'Lies' in Tibetan means 'return,' symbolizing their return to their homeland to end their grand lives, allowing their bodies to turn into dust on the slopes of their native land.

In summary, the origin of the Tabu place

names is related to the Ta tribe during Songtsen Gampo's era, and the Tabu region played a significant role in the unification and development of the Tubo Kingdom.

2.2.2 Religious and Cultural Heritage of the Tabu Region

The Karma Kagyu School, as the main religious force in the Thaba region, has had a profound impact on local culture. Its doctrines, rituals, and architectural styles have all become integral parts of Thaba culture. The teachings and rituals of the Karma Kagyu School hold significant importance locally. This School emphasizes the practical practice of esoteric methods and stresses the transmission through oral instruction. The supreme yoga teachings proposed by its founder, Marpa, not only allow for immediate enlightenment but also for immediate Buddhahood, profoundly influencing the spiritual world of the Thaba people. Additionally, the Karma Kagyu School pioneered the system of reincarnated lamas, which has been adopted by other Tibetan Buddhist sects to this day. In terms of architecture, the temples of the Karma Kagyu School incorporate styles from various ethnic groups, featuring lion-claw eaves designed by Tibetan craftsmen, dragon-whisker eaves and elephant-trunk eaves designed by Han and Naxi craftsmen. For example, the interior decorations of Babang Temple highlight the Karma Garzi painting style, with wall paintings, doors, windows, pillars, beams, and decorative paintings on dougong all reflecting this style. Moreover, the Thaba region is home to many ancient legends and folk stories, such as the legend of the construction of Samye Monastery. There are many captivating legends about the construction of Samye Monastery, the most

famous being the story of Padmasambhava building the monastery, where he subdued demons during the process and ultimately completed the temple's construction. These stories not only enrich the cultural content of the region but also reflect the wisdom and creativity of the Thaba people. Through these legends and stories, the culture of the Thaba region has been passed down and developed, making it a unique and colorful place.

2.2.3 The Evolution and Modern Changes of Tabu Culture

The Tabu region has actively participated in the modernization process of Xizang and has achieved remarkable results. For example, as the birthplace of the 13th Dalai Lama, Chongkang Manor not only witnessed the rise and fall of his family but also became an important carrier of Tabu culture. Religious rituals, temple architecture, and religious art have all been fully developed in this region. Throughout the long course of history, the Tabu culture has been passed down through oral transmission, written records, and other means. Whether they are folk legends, historical stories, religious beliefs, or customs, they all constitute an important part of Tabu culture. With the development of history, the administrative ownership of Lang County has also undergone multiple changes.

From the administration of Xia Yue Ru' during the Tubo period to later divisions such as the Gongbu Jiqiao and Ta'gong subcommittees, and now under the jurisdiction of Linzhi City, Lung County's administrative affiliation has continuously evolved. However, Tabu culture has consistently maintained its unique charm. In modern times, while Tabu culture in Chongkang Village, Lung County, preserves its

traditions, it also faces challenges and opportunities brought by modernization. With improvements in transportation and communication infrastructure, Tabu culture has been better disseminated and showcased. Additionally, the government and various sectors have increased efforts to protect and pass down Tabu culture. In recent years, Lung County has leveraged its rich cultural tourism resources to vigorously develop the cultural tourism industry. Tourist attractions like Chongkang Manor and the Thousand-Year-Old Walnut Forest have attracted numerous visitors, further promoting the spread and development of Tabu culture.

The evolution and transformation of Tabu culture in Long County's Chongkang Village is a process rich in historical depth and contemporary characteristics. In future development, Tabu culture will continue to maintain its unique charm and make greater contributions to the prosperity and development of Tibetan culture. Additionally, the core area of Tabu culture, Jindong Township, has achieved significant success in cultural heritage preservation. Through efforts such as protecting and passing down Jindong Tibetan paper-making techniques, promoting ethnic customs, collecting and organizing Princess Wencheng's series of folk songs, and preserving and utilizing historical and cultural sites, Jindong Township has successfully retained a wealth of cultural heritage and distinctive cultural appeal. These cultural inheritances not only provide local residents with abundant spiritual and cultural life but also inject new vitality into the socioeconomic development of Jindong Township.

III. THE MODERN FORMS OF TABU CULTURE INHERITANCE

In addressing the issues arising from the historical development and modern continuation of Tabu culture, this article outlines the following key points of inheritance, which are detailed as follows:

3.1 The Diversity of Transmission Methods

In modern society, the transmission of Tabu culture exhibits diverse characteristics. On one hand, traditional religious rituals, festivals, and folk activities remain crucial channels for preserving Tabu culture. These events typically feature rich music, dance, and craft displays, allowing people to deeply experience the allure of Tabu culture through visual and auditory means. On the other hand, with advancements in technology, digital technologies and online platforms have also been widely used in the preservation and development of Tabu culture. For example, through social media platforms, video materials, stories, and traditional crafts related to Tabu culture are widely disseminated, attracting more young people's attention.

3.2 Establishment of the Lang County's Tabu Cultural Research and Exchange Center

To better protect and promote Tabu culture, Lang County established the Tabu Culture Research and Exchange Center. The center is dedicated to deeply exploring the essence and value of Tabu culture and promoting its inheritance and development. Through cooperation with institutions such as the Tibet Agriculture and Animal Husbandry College, the Tabu Culture Research and Exchange Center has achieved significant results in academic research and cultural exchange. In the future, by

organizing various forums, lectures, exhibitions, and workshops, it aims to attract numerous scholars and enthusiasts, further enhancing the recognition and influence of Tabu culture.

3.3 Exploration and Practice of the Integration of Culture and Tourism

During its modernization process, Lang County has actively explored a development model that integrates culture and tourism. By tapping into the tourism resources of Tabu culture, it has created a distinctive cultural tourism brand with local characteristics, attracting a large number of tourists. This not only promotes local economic development but also provides new impetus for the inheritance and development of Tabu culture. Tourists can visit historically significant temples with guides, admire exquisite murals and sculptures, experience traditional handicrafts, and feel the profound heritage of Tabu culture. Meanwhile, local residents have increased their income and improved their living standards by participating in the tourism industry.

The above inheritance and practical achievements have partially overcome the challenges of sustainable development and heritage preservation. However, as previously mentioned, with the turning of the wheel of time, social changes and technological advancements continue to accelerate, posing significant potential pressures and challenges for the transmission of traditional culture. These challenges include the threat of cultural homogenization brought by globalization, the weakening interest of younger generations in traditional culture, and the impact of modern lifestyles on traditional customs. It is worth continuous attention and effort to carry forward

our cultural heritage through diverse methods of transmission, deepening educational approaches, utilizing modern technological means, and enhancing community involvement.

IV. Challenges and Countermeasures for the Inheritance of Tabu Culture

4.1 Challenges Faced

As modernization accelerates, Tabu cultural heritage faces numerous challenges. On one hand, traditional lifestyles and values are being eroded, threatening the transmission and development of Tabu culture. In contemporary society, young people increasingly prefer fast-paced urban life, leading to the gradual neglect of traditional crafts, festivals, and rituals. On the other hand, modern communication methods, while offering new opportunities for preserving Tabu culture, also pose risks of cultural homogenization. The internet and social media can quickly spread the unique charm of Tabu culture, but they may also cause it to lose its distinct regional characteristics, making it indistinguishable from other cultures.

4.2 Response Strategies

To address these challenges, Lang County has implemented the following strategies: First, it has strengthened cultural education by organizing various cultural lectures, exhibitions, and community activities to enhance public awareness and recognition of Tabu culture; second, it has reinforced heritage conservation, improving relevant laws, regulations, and policies to ensure proper maintenance and management of every historical site and artifact; third, it has promoted the integration of culture

and tourism, creating distinctive cultural tourism brands such as developing unique travel routes, designing exquisite souvenirs, and organizing diverse cultural festivals to attract more tourists; fourth, it has enhanced international exchange and cooperation by participating in international cultural festivals, hosting cultural exchange events, and establishing partnerships with overseas institutions to promote the international dissemination of Tabu culture, allowing the world to better understand and appreciate this unique culture.

V. CONCLUSION

This study primarily examines the development and evolution of Tabu culture from a historical perspective, analyzing its past and present and focusing on key preservation strategies and their effectiveness. It also provides recommendations for addressing related issues to support cultural heritage.

Tabu culture, a gem in the rich cultural treasury of Lango County in Tibet, carries profound historical memories and unique cultural essence, making it an indispensable part of local and broader Tibetan culture. It reflects the ancient wisdom, religious beliefs, artistic aesthetics, and social structures of the people of Lango County, as well as rich historical information and deep cultural heritage. This culture is invaluable for studying the historical changes, cultural transmission, and ethnic integration in the Tibet region. Traditional crafts within Tabu culture, such as exquisite Thangka paintings, intricate Tibetan carpet weaving, and unique metal carving, showcase the extraordinary skills and aesthetic pursuits of

ancient artisans. These artworks are not only visual delights but also spiritual anchors, often used in religious ceremonies and home decor, conveying a strong religious atmosphere and daily life. Additionally, music and dance are significant components of Tabu culture. Which traditional Tibetan performances, accompanied by melodious string instruments and rhythmic drumbeats, feature dancers in splendid traditional attire, showcasing the enthusiasm and vitality of the Tibetan people. These performances are popular during festivals and serve as important vehicles for cultural exchange, attracting tourists and scholars from around the world.

In today's rapidly developing modern society, the inheritance and development of Tabu culture face unprecedented opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the waves of globalization and informatization provide a broader platform for the dissemination of Tabu culture, allowing it to transcend geographical limitations and be understood and appreciated by more people. Through the internet and social media, the unique charm of Tabu culture spreads quickly, attracting considerable attention and affection. On the other hand, the acceleration of modernization also poses a risk of marginalizing or even forgetting traditional cultures. The advancement of urbanization leads to the gradual disappearance of many traditional lifestyles, and younger generations' interest in traditional culture wanes, resulting in a break in the transmission of Tabu culture. How to maintain cultural authenticity while effectively integrating with modern society has become an urgent issue to address.

Therefore, protecting and inheriting the

Tabu culture requires multiple efforts. The government should increase its efforts to protect cultural heritage, formulate relevant policies and regulations, and support cultural heritage projects. Meanwhile, educational institutions can cultivate a new generation of cultural inheritors by offering relevant courses. Communities and civil organizations can also enhance public awareness and interest in Tabu culture by organizing cultural festivals, exhibitions, and workshops. Only in this way can Tabu culture radiate new vitality and vigor in the new era, continuing to bring spiritual nourishment and cultural pride to people.

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